

Testimony in Favor of the Proposed Amendment to the Extreme Risk Protection Order Law

Representative Stafstrom, Senator Winfield, Senator Kasser, Representative Blumenthal and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Aileen Brill and I live in Westport. I am a parent of school-aged children in CT. I am also a member of the Board of Directors of the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport (the "Council") and a member of the Council's Advocacy Committee.

The Council is a faith-based, non-sectarian social services agency dedicated to meeting the needs of people at risk and breaking the cycle of poverty and crisis in the Greater Bridgeport area. We have all witnessed the devastation wrought by the ongoing threat of violence in Bridgeport. Families and communities are torn apart when individuals who are a threat to themselves or others are able to obtain firearms. No one can thrive in a community or a home where they do not feel safe.

The proposed changes to the existing law are common sense changes. When an extreme risk protection order ("ERPO") expires, the restriction should not be lifted unless the subject is no longer at risk of violence. In addition, a protection order should be available from preventing a person at risk of violence from even obtaining a firearm. Finally, it is necessary to expand the avenues to pursue extreme risk protection orders beyond law enforcement. Some members of our community do not feel comfortable involving law enforcement and should be able to seek assistance from other sources such as mental health professionals and the courts.

I am submitting this testimony as I believe that the proposed changes to the ERPO law will reduce urban violence. I am also submitting this testimony as a parent of children who attend public elementary and middle schools in CT. I am deeply saddened by the reality that our children engage in lockdown drills as part of their curriculum. Before any mass shooting, there are always warning signs. An effective ERPO could be instrumental in preventing the next school shooting. Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an ERPO law, when we did so in 1999. We must continue to be a leader in gun violence prevention. As we remain forever bound to the tragedy at Sandy Hook, we must also remain steadfast in our commitment to end gun violence.

Opponents of the bill may assert that ERPOs lack due process protections and are abused by family members. Neither of these is true. An ex parte process is used that is virtually the same as the one used for issuing domestic violence restraining orders. The subject is entitled to a court hearing before the order is extended beyond 14 days. There is no evidence that the process is used to harass gun owners. Judges are required to have clear and convincing evidence to issue final risk protection orders.

There could not be a more compelling state interest than the protection of children. The proposed amendment to the ERPO law is narrowly tailored to achieve this compelling purpose and uses the least restrictive means to achieve its purpose. In this regard, the

amendment is not only necessary, it is Constitutional. I urge you to vote to protect the children of CT.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Aileen Brill
Westport, CT